

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MASERU
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 166071

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:OVIP, LT

SUBJECT: PRIVATE VISIT TO US BY KING MOSHOESHOE

REF: (A) STATE 138466; (B) MASERU 961

1. DEPTOFF MET JUNE 23 AND 27 WITH LESOTHO AMBASSADOR
MAKEKA, WHO APPEARS TO BE CONFUSED ABOUT PROPOSAL
FOR A PRIVATE ROYAL VISIT TO US, POSSIBLY CAUGHT BETWEEN
CONFLICTING VIEWS ABOUT IT IN THE GOL. NORMALLY
STRAIGHTFORWARD AND DIRECT, MAKEKA WAS EVASIVE AND NERVOUS
IN DISCUSSING PROPOSED ITINERARY (REF A). FIRST OF ALL,
HE SAID, THE DATES THE KING SUGGESTED WERE QUITE IMPOSSIBLE;
IF IT COULD BE DONE AT ALL IT OUGHT TO BE LATER IN SEPTEMBER,
AFTER LABOR DAY WHEN MORE ATTENTION COULD BE FOCUSED
ON IT. SECOND, HE ASSERTED, THE ENTIRE PROPOSAL HAD TAKEN
HIS GOVERNMENT UNAWARES; THE FIRST THEY HAD HEARD OF IT
WAS WHEN PROPOSED ITINERARY WAS CONVEYED TO GOL BY EMBASSY
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MASERU. (MAKEKA HAD, HOWEVER, INDICATED NO SUCH SURPRISE
WHEN SUBSTANCE OF ITINERARY WAS SHARED WITH HIM EARLIER
THIS MONTH.) THIRD, HIS GOVERNMENT HAD PROBLEMS WITH
SOME ASPECTS OF THE SCHEDULE; HE THOUGHT IT INAPPROPRIATE,
FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE KING SHOULD SPEND SO MUCH TIME
VISITING DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURAL CENTERS AND SUCH

INSTITUTIONS AS CRS AND CARE. HE SAID THE KING DID NOT REALLY HAVE A DETAILED INTEREST IN SUCH SUBJECTS BUT WOULD PREFER TO VISIT, FOR INSTANCE, CALIFORNIA AND SOME TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY HYDROELECTRIC PROJECTS. MAKEKA PROPOSED THAT THE VISIT BE RECAST ALONG MORE FORMAL LINES, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER.

2. DEPTOFF REPLIED THAT A LATER DATE WOULD POSE NO PROBLEMS FOR THE US, BUT OBSERVED THAT IT WAS THE KING WHO HAD SUGGESTED SEPTEMBER 1-10; HE MIGHT HAVE REASONS (SUCH AS UNIVERSITY CALENDAR) WHY THESE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE. THE STATEMENT THAT THE FIRST THE GOL HAD HEARD OF THE PROPOSED VISIT WAS FROM OUR EMBASSY WAS PUZZLING SINCE IT HAD BEEN PERMANENT SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MASHOLOGU WHO HAD ADVISED US (REF B) THAT THE KING HAD REACTIVATED HIS PLANS TO VISIT THE US AND ASKED US TO SUGGEST ITINERARIES. (MAKEKA THEN RETRACTED THE STATEMENT, SAYING THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME CONFUSION IN MASERU ON THIS POINT.) AS TO THE EMPHASIS IN THE ITINERARY ON MINIMUM PROTOCOL AND VISITS TO DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS, THIS HAD BEEN SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED BY THE KING, BUT COULD CERTAINLY BE MODIFIED. WE WOULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT IF THAT WAS WHAT THE GOL PREFERRED, BUT IN VIEW OF RECENT DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAIN-
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ING WHITE HOUSE APPOINTMENTS FOR VISITING HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT, WE COULD HARDLY BE ENCOURAGING. DID THIS MEAN THE GOL WISHED TO CHANGE THE PROPOSAL FROM A PRIVATE VISIT TO AN OFFICIAL ONE?

3. MAKEKA HESITATED, THEN CONFIDED THAT WHAT WAS REALLY BOTHERING THE GOL WAS THAT THEY HOPED TO OBTAIN AN INVITATION FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT BY PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN NEXT YEAR. THE KING'S PROPOSED PRIVATE VISIT HAD APPARENTLY DIVIDED OPINION IN MASERU OVER WHETHER THIS WOULD PREJUDICE THE CHANCES FOR SUCH A VISIT BY JONATHAN AND OVER WHICH TOOK PRECEDENCE. MAKEKA SAID HE DID NOT SUPPOSE THERE WAS ANY CHANCE THAT BOTH THE KING AND JONATHAN MIGHT BE OFFERED INVITATIONS FOR OFFICIAL VISITS IN 1979? DEPTOFF AGREED THAT THIS WOULD BE UNREALISTIC BUT SAID A PRIVATE VISIT BY THE KING WHICH DID NOT REPEAT NOT INCLUDE A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT WOULD NOT AFFECT THE CHANCES FOR OFFICIAL INVITATIONS LATER AS WE VIEWED THE TWO THINGS QUITE DIFFERENTLY.

4. THIS APPEARS TO BE A RESURFACING OF THE INTERNAL

GOL POLITICAL AND PERSONALITY DISPUTES WHICH CAUSED POSTPONEMENT OF A PREVIOUS PROPOSAL FOR A PRIVATE VISIT BY THE KING (REF C) IN MARCH, WITH THE ADDED DIMENSION OF A POTENTIAL REQUEST FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT BY PM JONATHAN. WHILE THIS POINT WAS NOT REPEAT NOT MADE TO MAKEKA, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY OUR RECENT INABILITY TO ARRANGE A TIMELY WHITE HOUSE MEETING FOR PRESIDENT KHAMA, AND FOR OTHER REASONS, IT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR DEPARTMENT TO REQUEST A PRESIDENTIAL MEETING FOR EITHER KING MOSHOESHOE OR JONATHAN. WE HAVE NO WISH TO BECOME INVOLVED IN INTERNECINE RIVALRIES IF THE KING PREFERS A LOW-PROTOCOL PRIVATE VISIT TO THE US WHILE THE MFA PREFER A HIGH-VISIBILITY ONE. WE WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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BE PLEASED TO GO AHEAD WITH VISIT IF WE RECEIVE A CLEAR SIGNAL OF GOL WISHES BUT BELIEVE USG SHOULD HOLD FURTHER ACTION IN ABEYANCE UNTIL AND UNLESS GOL IS ABLE CLEARLY TO RECONCILE EVIDENT INTERNAL DIFFERENCES ON MATTER.

5. BELIEVE THIS SHOULD BE HANDLED PRIMARILY BETWEEN EMBASSY AND MFA RATHER THAN BETWEEN DEPT AND LESOTHO EMBASSY IN ORDER TO CLARIFY APPARENT GOL CONFUSION. UNLESS YOU PERCEIVE OBJECTIONS, YOU SHOULD REITERATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO SUGGEST ITINERARIES OR OFFER OTHER COURTESIES RE KING'S VISIT AS REQUESTED AND SUGGEST A DIPLOMATIC NOTE CONVEYING FORMAL GOL REQUEST. VANCE

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